



Department of Justice

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Western District of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2006
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**LOCAL TEAM MEETS WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL ALBERTO R. GONZALES,
ENHANCES STRATEGIES TO COMBAT GANG VIOLENCE AND GUN CRIMES**

**Twelve representatives from cities in Western Louisiana
attended the PSN Conference in Denver, Colorado**

LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA – Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales this week brought together over 1,300 federal, state and local prosecutors, law enforcement officials, community leaders and other members of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) teams from across the nation to discuss efforts to reduce violent crime. The Bush Administration has devoted more than \$1.6 billion to PSN since 2001, including nearly \$40 million that will be distributed to local task forces this year.

“Project Safe Neighborhoods is a street-level partnership that helps local leaders solve local problems,” said Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. “Through this program, law enforcement at every level supports innovative strategies to combat gun crime and gang violence in communities across America.”

The conference centers on PSN’s many successes in fighting gun crime since the initiative was announced by President Bush in 2001, and on using PSN’s partnerships and successful strategies to combat the problem of gang violence. PSN conference training topics range from enforcement strategies to remove violent gang members and gun criminals from the streets, to school violence prevention programs, and building community partnerships.

The strength of PSN continues to be its strategic mix of federal, state and local agencies and community leaders focused on law enforcement and crime prevention. Prosecutors pursue the strongest possible punishment for those who violate firearms statutes, while community partners aggressively educate their constituents about consequence of illegal gun violence and gang activity through services and resources provided by PSN.

Twelve local representatives participated in the fourth PSN national conference in Denver, sharing successful strategies for combating gun crime and gang violence. Attending the PSN conference from the Western District of Louisiana are: Donald W. Washington, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana; Joe Mickel, Assistant U.S. Attorney and PSN Coordinator; Rutha Chatwood, Victim Services Assistant Program Manager for the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement; Donna B. Cavanaugh, Louisiana State Chapter Director and Coordinator of the Think

First of the Ark-La-Tex Region; Eric Moore, Security Director of the Housing Authority for the City of Shreveport and Program Director of Operation Drop It Like Its Hot; Sergeant J. Stan Felts, Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office; Sergeant Gregory Powell, Alexandria Police Department; Lieutenant Ray Laviolet, Lake Charles Police Department; Sergeant Eugene Ellis, Monroe Police Department; Wade Raspberry, ATF Resident Agent in Charge; Lawrence "Kip" Goldsmith, ATF Special Agent; and Chris Turner, Deputy US Marshal.

"The Western District of Louisiana covers 42 of Louisiana's 64 parishes. We have over 200 law enforcement organizations and a host of community organizations to combat common criminals. We have a great team of both law enforcement members and community leaders who are dedicated to make PSN a success. Because of the dedication and determination of the PSN Task Forces in the Western District of Louisiana, our district has dramatically increased firearm related prosecutions since the program's inception in 2001, resulting in safer communities," remarked U.S. Attorney Donald W. Washington.

U.S. Attorney Washington noted that in 2001 before President Bush mandated the creation of PSN, the Western District of Louisiana obtained 17 convictions on firearm charges. In 2005, that number rose sixfold to 102. Sentences ordered by federal judges for PSN cases in the Western District of Louisiana average approximately 5 years of federal incarceration

Washington credits the district's success with PSN to the working relationships his office has formed with other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in his district. He states, "In order for an initiative of this magnitude to succeed, each agency at the federal, state, and local level must work together as a team toward a common goal. PSN focuses on the firearm, which is the tool of choice for the violent criminal. In this district, a criminal committing a gun crime will do hard time"

Since combating gang-violence can only be done by working in partnership with state and local law enforcement and community organizations, the Attorney General directed each U.S. Attorney to convene a Gang Prevention Summit in his or her district designed to explore additional opportunities in the area of gang prevention. The Western District of Louisiana has already initiated these summits but will hold additional summits the next eight months. These summits bring together law enforcement and community leaders to discuss best practices, identify gaps in services, and create a prevention plan to target at-risk youth within their individual communities.

The Attorney General announced that the Department of Justice released nearly \$30 million in grant assistance to support state and local anti-gang efforts of PSN task forces across the country. Approximately \$202,000 has been allocated to the Western district of Louisiana to support enforcement and prevention efforts to combat violent gangs under PSN:

- (1) The **Lake Charles Police Department, led by Chief Donald Dixon**, will receive **\$31,440** to assist in identifying and deterring criminal gang activity;
- (2) The **Shreveport Police Department, led by Chief Mike Campbell** will receive **\$82,000** to assist in a project to deter and punish gangs and violent offenders;

- (3) **The Volunteers for Youth Justice/ThinkFirst of Ark-La-Tex, led by Donna B. Cavanaugh, B.A., Louisiana State Chapter Director, Coordinator of ThinkFirst of the Ark-La-Tex, and Joe D. Duke, Executive Director of Volunteers for Youth Justice** will receive **\$53,515** to assist in its “Stop and ThinkFirst” prevention program. The program focuses on avoiding gangs, preventing gun violence, knowing the law, and acceptable alternatives to fighting.
- (4) **The Housing Authority of the City of Shreveport, led by Donzetta H. Kimble, Executive Director, and Eric Moore, Security Director,** will receive **\$35,491** to assist in its youth outreach/mentoring program. The program prompts the participants to look at gang activity and gun-related violence from the surviving victim’s point of view.

In addition, the Department will award \$10 million across the country to support PSN efforts to fight gun crime that is not necessarily gang-related. A total of approximately \$83,000 was allocated for use in the Western District of Louisiana:

- (1) **The Shreveport Police Department, led by Chief Mike Campbell, will receive \$40,000** to assist in the investigation of gun-related crime and to conduct enforcement initiatives throughout the Shreveport metropolitan area;
- (2) **The Alexandria Police Department, led by Chief Daren Coutee, will receive \$31,592** to assist in reduction of gun offenses through policing efforts and the “Fathers in Court” program, along with community outreach and education; and
- (3) **The 15th Judicial District Court in Lafayette, Louisiana, led by Judge Thomas Duplantier and Chris Smith, Court Services Manager, will receive \$12,000** to assist in continuing its “Choose Life, End Violence, Earn Respect” (C.L.E.V.E.R.) Program, which educates Lafayette Parish middle school students in both public and private schools on various issues including how to avoid dangerous encounters and the need to report and handle emotional stress caused by violence, all designed to reduce gun violence, truancy, and drug use within Lafayette Parish.

These efforts will complement additional Department programs, such as the Attorney General’s Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative, which has allocated a total of \$15 million to fund comprehensive prevention, enforcement and re-entry efforts in six sites: Los Angeles, Tampa, Cleveland, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Milwaukee, and the “222 Corridor,” between Easton and Lancaster in Pennsylvania.

For more information, please contact U.S. Attorney Donald Washington at (337) 262-6618 or Bill Flanagan at (318) 676-3600. You can also obtain additional information from the PSN website at www.psn.gov.

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